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## CHAUCEER'S LADY OF THE DAISIES

From the dust and din and disorder of the strife that has vexed the many pages of *Anglia* in which, during the past three years, two irrepressible disputants, Lange and Langhans, have vehemently debated the so-called "Legendenprologfrage," the reader hies him worlds away to the antipode of all this discord, Chaucer's own Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, with its repose of daisied fields and its charm of courtly manners and speech. When loudly acclaimed "Wissenschaft," in half a dozen articles, blasphemes the bright lyrist to his face by solemnly assigning the most personal of all his poems, the F. or Fairfax version of the Prologue, to an alleged monkish plagiarist, or when vaunted "Philologische Aufklärungsarbeit" achieves a characteristic triumph by setting Richard of Bordeaux' liveries to making in Nature's own green and white, the daisy flower goes to rest, "for fere of nyght, so hateth she derknesse." The only adequate corrective of this recent Chaucer scholarship seems to be Chaucer himself. Happy indeed is he who, unwitting of us interpreters, reads the Prologue with an open mind until his eyelids drop their shade.

The most cursory survey of the outcome of earlier and better discussions of the book now open before us, soon makes the student painfully aware of the seeming futility of much of the finest research. In two notable essays in our *Modern Language Publications* (1904-1905), Professor Lowes, by his study of sources, demonstrated, one is tempted to say, to the last demands of proof, the priority of the F. Prologue over the G (Cambridge Gg. 4. 27) version; and yet in the current number of *Englische Studien* the veteran Koch shows himself still an obstinate heretic in despite of all this cogent reasoning, and casts his dented sword into the scale. Things in possession have so firm a grip and men are so sensitive to the power of names that the misleading A and B titles of the Prologue versions will long continue to counteract the most potent arguments. Professor Tatlock—my present host, for I write this on Stanford ground—gives full voice in his *Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works* (p. 103) not only to the matured

conviction of the scholar, but to the immediate impression of any layman unbefogged by vapors, when he argues that the poet, following the amorous fashion of the Marguerite cult of the late fourteenth century, pays, throughout the earlier of the two Prologues (F), deep personal homage to the daisy not merely as a fair and fresh flower, but as the symbol of a noble feminine soul; and that in the later version (G) he displays only "the minimum of devotion necessary to justify the introduction of the daisy at all." But note that Professors Lowes and Kittredge,<sup>1</sup> and others, including Langhans of late, reject—quite without warrant, as it seems to some of us—this vivid human element, the all pervasive living woman of the poem. To them the daisy represents, if anything at all, only the dream figment, Alceste, who is the mythical Alceste, and no creature of fourteenth-century flesh and blood. Thus our scholarship, like Penelope, outwits its followers by unweaving in the darkness what it has woven in the light. After the apparent failure of these brilliant demonstrations to carry general conviction, dare I, the latest comer, hope that the personal story which Chaucer so lucidly tells me everywhere in and between the lines of Prologue F. will not seem as shadowy to many as the "clerical plagiarist" of Langhans and the "Bordeaux liveries" of Lange? "By assay ther may no man it preve." In such a reading as I offer, there can be no absolute certainty, only a balance of probabilities.

And now, may I suggest, with all deference to those whom "I come after, gleaning here and there," that the solution of that most fascinating problem of the Prologue, the identity of Alceste, has been thwarted by a disregard of this balance of probabilities, by a lack of a clear issue. The line has been wrongly drawn between the scholars who, like Ten Brink and Tatlock, have proclaimed that the daisy and Alceste portray one lady that Chaucer knew, and that lady the young Queen Anne, at whose request, Lydgate tells us, he made the *Legend*, and to whom the Alceste of the earlier Prologue bids him send the finished book; and the scholars who, like Lowes and Kittredge, have dismissed Queen Anne from the daisied fields and from the dream-vision, and, with her, all traces of a living presence. The ones have accepted the woman and Queen;

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Philology*, VI, 435 f.

the others have rejected the Queen and woman.<sup>2</sup> Now I agree with both and differ with both, for I reject the queen and yet accept the woman. My reasons for discarding irrelevant royalty are none of them new. First, because Alceste, so far from seeing herself in Anne's glass, explicitly recognizes in the dedication the separate personality of the English Queen,<sup>3</sup> secondly, because the unlike histories of Alceste and Anne do not tolerate the forced identification; and thirdly, because the poet's passion for the daisy and for the lady whom it symbolizes are such as Chaucer could and would never have felt and expressed for his young Queen, I cannot accept my friend Tatlock's conclusion that "Chaucer used the daisy and Alcestis as vehicles for his personal tribute to Queen Anne, and that the personal devotion expressed in F. was meant and understood as a compliment to her." But I am equally far from believing that all this rapturous homage voices no real devotion and that there is no contemporary woman in the story. "Cherchez la femme!" The chief aim and end of the present writing is the quest of a lady more artfully hidden than the nymph among the reeds. Let us together seek and find the woman whose beloved being pervades Chaucer's waking thoughts and transmutes his romantic visions in the earlier Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*.

<sup>2</sup> Compromise arguments have not served to break the deadlock. Mr. B. L. Jefferson seems to me not only to dodge the issue, but to disregard the poem's essential unity of thought, with the conciliatory suggestion (*J. E. G. Ph. XIII*, 1914, 434) that "till the beginning of the dream Chaucer's worship of the daisy does homage to Queen Anne and to Anne alone. Then from the beginning of the dream (210) Anne, Alceste, and the daisy merge into one. In the last 150 lines Alceste stands practically alone. The prominence of Anne and the daisy gradually diminish to the vanishing point." And while Professor Samuel Moore's opposition (*Modern Language Review*, VII, 1912, 189) to the identification of Alceste and Anne is effectively destructive, less cogent seems, at least to one reader, his subtle plea that "Alceste, though herself and nothing more as a character in history and fiction, is chosen as a model of the wifely virtue exemplified in Anne."

<sup>3</sup> Alceste, the Queen of Thrace, bids Chaucer send the finished book with her compliments to the Queen of England (F 496-497). May I echo Professor Kittredge's pertinent protest (*Modern Philology*, VI, 435): "If Chaucer had feared that some ingenious interpreter might fancy that Alceste was meant for Queen Anne, and had wished to forestall such a misapprehension, he could hardly have done it better. But unfortunately he did not reckon with us moderns."

We need no scholar to tell us that the F. Prologue is divided into two parts—the first, a long day's prelude to a dream (1-196) and the second, the dream itself. So he who runs may read. We do need a scholar to show us, as Professor Lowes has done most convincingly, that the structure of the first part owes not a little to Deschamps's *Lay de Franchise* and that the second confesses its plain indebtedness to Froissart's *Paradys d'Amours*. Both these French poems unquestionably brought a wealth of suggestions to the Englishman's shaping brain. But the "great translator," if he be great poet too, is the master and not the slave of his sources; and Chaucer moves among borrowed material with the unfettered step of the royal invader. Or rather let us regard him as a skilful architect using, it is true, in the foundation of his Prologue, much material that was ready to his hand, but plotting primarily with a view to the superstructure and to the unity of the whole. The prime factor in the making, at this later stage of his growth, is the dexterous adjustment of part to part, due not so much to the free use of other men's verses, as to the poet's intimate knowledge of the motives and stimuli of dream phenomena. As Shakspeare, in his frequent illustrations of crowd consciousness, anticipates directly the findings of social psychologists, so Chaucer, in his happy presentations of dream sources and symbols, forecasts in a dozen striking ways the discoveries of present-day psychoanalysis, without many of its attendant horrors. Nor need we marvel at this foresight, for Freud himself has observed with truth:<sup>4</sup> "Much of the artificial dreams contrived by poets are intended for symbolic interpretation, for they reproduce the thought conceived by the poet in a disguise found to be in accordance with the characteristics of our dreaming, as we know these from experience"<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by Brill, 1913, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Skeat's annotations in the *Complete Works* indicate the sources of many of Chaucer's comments upon dreams,—a distracting *Quellenjagd*, which we cannot now pursue at length. There is large evidence of the poet's interest in all phases and sorts of visions. In the introduction to the *House of Fame*, he broaches their causes, kinds, meanings and the large question of fulfilment. Are they psychic—that is, do people's temperaments make them dream of what they have been thinking on? So Jean de Meung had argued in a lengthy passage of the *Roman de la Rose*, 19116f. and so Claudian had testified in verses which had inspired a notable stanza in the *Parlement of Foules*, 99-105. Are they somatic or supernatural—the question debated so earnestly by those

The first two hundred lines of Prologue F.—the sunlit hours in daisied fields—are structurally valuable as providing the psychic stimuli of the chief phenomena in the dream that comes with the darkness.

The poet's imaginative use of the daily interest as the psychic source of his dream is in close accord with truth. Our dreams are built largely upon the sensory impressions of the preceding day, experiences on which one has not yet slept for a night. Machaut in his *Dit du Vergier* and Deschamps in his *Lay Amoureux* and many another French weaver of fancies prepared for the dream background by a similar actual setting of outdoor life on the morning before the vision.<sup>6</sup> To this convention of the *genre*, which has its roots deep in human experience, Chaucer has imparted proper psychical significance. Men have failed to read aright the *Legend* Prologue because they have overlooked the close relation of the phantasies of the vision to their exciting sources, the thought and mood of the poet's immediate past. The stimuli of the dream in the *Book of the Duchess* were not only such explicit causes as the poet's melancholy and the Ovidian tale of bereavement, but a graver implicit reason, the "rooted sorrow" of Blanche's death which fills all his recent memory. Our study here as there is to trace the translation of the waking thoughts of the poet's day into the picture writing of the next night, to examine the speedy conversion of actual ideas, latent dream-material, into dream-content.

This material so soon to undergo vivid transformation had long proved delightfully provocative of visions—the daisy complex of the Marguerite cult. A mass of ideas and emotions had

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scholarly experts in dream-lore, Chauntecleer and Pertelote? Must we deem them the products of physical disorders and distresses, or are they sent from above as warnings of the future? Macrobius, in his famous *Commentary* upon Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, and Cicero himself, in *De Divinatione*, had given many instances of dream prophecies which the Cock pompously retails. Macrobius, too, had classified the chief forms of dream; so Chaucer now tells them over in the *House of Fame* foreword. The *Parlement* passage suggests the chief Freudian tenet—that "a dream is the imaginary fulfilment of some ungratified wish." And the waking preludes of the *Book of the Duchess* and the *Legend* Prologue show that the English poet could link,—as French vision-makers had often done before him—the actual and dream states.

<sup>6</sup> For valuable comment upon the structure of love-visions, French, Italian, English, see Sypherd, *Chaucer's House of Fame*, *Chaucer Society*, 2d Ser., 39.

already collected around the common nucleus of the little flower. It is dangerous to assert a negative, but there are, to my knowledge, no "daisy" poems of Machaut, Deschamps or Froissart that do not voice loving homage to living women,—Marguerites, whose full names we often know. The flower is never worshiped by these Frenchmen for its own sake, but for its erotic symbolism and suggestion. Through the daisy a poignant personal element penetrates their dreams. Hence, on literary grounds alone, many—with Professor Tatlock as their spokesman—refused to believe that Chaucer is honoring only a flower when he exalts the daisy as his "maistresse," his lady sovereigne," his "erthly god," or when he passionately proclaims that "ther loved no wight hotter in his life." Was this rapture mere pretence, conjured up to serve occasions of poetic pomp? As if to refute any misconception of this amorous intent, elective affinity becomes vocal in lines of yet deeper spiritual intimacy. 'She whom the poet serves is the guiding light that leads the sorrowful lover through this dark world, the mistress of his wit, knitting in her bond his word and work and making his heart, like a harp under her fingers, speak to her liking.' In the *Filostrato* Prelude (as Mr. Lowes himself has taught us) Boccaccio had thus chanted the loving omnipotence of his paramour, the flame-like Maria d'Acquino. Thus French and Italian precedents (of which much more in a later place) alike suggest that no daisy, no queen, no myth, but an Englishwoman of his own class was in Chaucer's thought when he made the continental heartcries his own.<sup>7</sup>

The psychological grounds for believing that, in the first part of the Prologue, Chaucer has in mind a woman as real as Beatrice "col sangue suo e con le sue giunture" are even stronger

<sup>7</sup> "Mere commonplace and convention," cries the genius of devitalization which drains great imaginative creations of their life-sap and leaves only juiceless pulp. Men live and love and worship through catchwords and use the borrowed phrases of poems and of prayers to utter their deepest emotions. Even the masters of verse, particularly in the Middle Ages, often unlock their hearts with borrowed keys. If Boccaccio himself conveys his genuine feeling for Maria in that exquisite reminiscence of Dante at the opening of the *Fiammetta*, "O donna, tu sola se' la beatudine nostra," wherefore shall any man conclude that Chaucer's potent reminiscences of Boccaccio's own glowing words of love are only empty phrases signifying nought but a daisy? When the author of the *Pearl* turns to his purpose the lines of the *Olympia* eclogue (XIV),

than those of literary tradition. The dream image of Alceste, lady of the daisies, can be stimulated only by an earlier symbolic association of the flower with a noble living creature not unlike the mythical love's martyr in certain striking features of her story, and finally identified with the "Thracian" queen—as far as an actuality can be with a product of phantasy—in the god of Love's revelation at the poem's end. The unhappy argument of Lowes and Kittredge that the daisy is "equated only with Alceste, who is her mythical self and nobody else" has already been successfully countered by Jefferson's sensible protest<sup>8</sup> that "it would seem absurd for Chaucer, who is no visionary, no chaser after moonbeams, to lavish such extravagant homage upon the pale figure of a long forgotten, mythical heroine like Alceste, and that, as Alceste has not yet been introduced, we should hardly expect Chaucer to make Alceste the guiding star of his life here in the waking day in the field." With the choice of the subject of Chaucer's adoration hitherto limited to Queen Anne, a living woman, and to Queen Alceste, a figment of dreams, it is not surprising that, despite the overwhelming objections to this particular personal identification, men should have chosen the human alternative and should have defended it so persistently. To believe that Chaucer worships through

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in which Boccaccio mourns the death of his little *Violante*, why should we not infer that the Englishman is bewailing a like grief? But the love of the child and the love of the lady are squeezed by scholarly hands out of the *Pearl* and the *Legend*. And the result is mechanism. Is Chaucer's need in 1399 the less real, because "Complaints to Purses" are things of a long tradition? Was young James I at Windsor the less in love with Lady Joan Beaufort, because, in the *King's Quhair*, he sings of their first meeting to the tune of Chaucer's young kinsmen glimpsing Emelye from the tower. H. O. Taylor has spoken truly and eloquently of such indebtedness in his *Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century*, II, 225. "When Sidney looked into his heart and began to write according to its promptings, he found a heart or mind stored with love-thoughts and images derived from reading which had become part of himself and his own musings. He could 'look into his heart and write' and make use of all its thoughts and sentiments, whatever their provenance. Thus others' conceits appropriated became expressions of genuine feelings and others' thoughts were made part of a lover's argument. Sincerity of imagination is called for rather than originality." Concerning Chaucer this story may be narrated without the change of a word. His imagination is never more sincere than in his moments of deepest indebtedness.

<sup>8</sup> *J. E. G. Ph.*, XIII, 436.



the daisy seen in the morning sunlight a dream-lady whom he does not meet until the sleep of the next night, and whom he does not then recognize, betrays a confusion of thought which leaps blindly over the barriers between the world of actual experience and dreamland. To believe, on the other hand, that the daisy symbolizes to the poet in his waking state a beloved woman, whom his dreaming fancy later transfigures beyond immediate identification by his dazzled sense perceptions, is merely to recognize the natural process of dream formation.

"We dream by night what we by day have thought." What were the thoughts of the poet on the day before his dream? Before Chaucer leads us forth into the fields on the May morning, his mind is running on books and the marvels to be found in their pages—even high authority for the joys of heaven and the pains of hell. When he declares, at the very outset of the Prologue (3-6), that "there is no one dwelling in this country that has been in either heaven or hell," I not only agree with those who think that he is anticipating the self-sacrifice of Alceste who went to hell for her lord, but I scent also a suggestion of his later sustained comparison between Alceste and an Englishwoman, who, honoring her husband's memory as highly as her Greek prototype, was yet denied the boon of taking his place among the shades. Late in the dream, to Love's account of the mythical martyr, the god appends this comforting assurance (553): "Ne shal no trewe lover come in helle." The poet muses over old books, because the ladies whom he will meet in his dream and chant in his balade step from oft-read pages, and because the god of Love will point him to old authors for their stories. He recalls, too, new books wrought by "lovers who can make of sentiment," for they furnish him awake in the fields with many happy phrases for homage to his lady through the daisy symbol, and provide the psychic stimuli of many visual features of his dream—the so-called conventional setting. Now let us to the fields with the poet, to discover there the promptings of later visionary pictures. Take one notable instance of this close relation between the impressions of the day and plastic images of the night. The May-day rover sees "this flour agein the sonne sprede" early in the morning (48-49) and watches it go to rest at sunset (60-63), for

"Hir chere is pleynly sprad in the brightnesse  
Of the sonne, for ther it wol unclose."

Again he tells us that he is "at the resurrection of the flower, when it should unclose against the sun that rose as red as rose" (F. 110-112). Now watch the vivid transformation of this natural phenomenon and of the emotions it provokes into picturesque dream-content. The daisy lady of the vision enters, we are told twice (F. 213, 241), in the hand of the god of Love, who is thus portrayed, (F. 130 f):

"His gilte heer was corowned with a sonne  
Instede of golde for hevynesse and wyghte;  
Therwith me thought his face shon so brighte  
That wel unnethes myght I him beholde," etc.

The psychic justification of this vision of a sun-crowned love-deity of blinding brightness leading by the hand a daisy-lady lies in the poet's waking thought, which has already conceived of the daisy, opening in the sunlight so necessary to its life, as a symbol of his lady unfolding her gentle graces in the light and warmth of love. Or mark a notable difference between the earlier and later versions of the Prologue. The resurrection of all nature after the winter season, which in F. belongs to the actual day in the field, becomes in G. the initial feature of the dream, and, I am inclined to think, with far less structural fitness, because the *leitmotif* of every bird's song, truth in wedded love, connects in F. the waking and sleeping states by promoting the central idea of the dream-composition. When the "tydif" and other winged transgressors against love, beseeching mercy for their trespassing and humbly singing their repentance, are for a time in danger of judgment, but are finally forgiven by Pity "through his strong gentle might" we find in these lines, which occur only in F. (152-170) an imaginative forecast of the offending dreamer's defense before the Love god's tribunal and of his ultimate escape through the same "Innocence and ruled Curtesye." So, because the waking poet kneels by the fresh daisy flower upon the small sweet grass (F. 117), he is found by the Love god and his train in the dream kneeling by Love's own flower (308 f.), his "relyke digne and delytable," and is rebuked for his boldness. Only by thus carefully observing the elaboration of the psycho-

logically significant experiences of the poet's May-day into enthralling dream-pictures, can we appreciate the keenness of Chaucer's analysis and the fineness of his art. The very phrases of his waking moments recur to his lips in sleep. The daisy is, to the doting poet, the "empress and flower of flowers all" and he adds, thinking of a certain English gentlewoman, (F. 186): "I pray to God that faire mote she falle." So the lady-sovereign of his dream passeth all other women (F. 277): "I prey to God that ever falle hire faire." This is but one of many ways in which the lady of his life and the lady of his dream are linked. Need we multiply instances of such repetition?<sup>9</sup>

In the preliminary staging of the dream, Chaucer is not content to offer only psychic stimuli of a vision of flower-like love amid lovely flowers. He must provide also physical or "somatic" exciting sources. And, so, recognizing the influences that bodily position and slight occurrences during sleep exercise upon the formation of dreams, he lays him down to rest in a little arbor newly banked with fresh turves on a couch strewn with flowers. External stimulus of touch and smell reinforces the internal stimulus of tangible and fragrant memories.

Chaucer's dream thus exhibits the continuation of the waking state by uniting itself with those ideas which have shortly before been in his consciousness, for, as we have seen, he had learned from bookish sources as well as from experience that "dreams are in general reflex images of things that men in waking hours have known."<sup>10</sup> Like other dreamers mediæval and modern,—the French vision-makers among the rest—he thinks in a series of living pictures, because he now perceives the impressions of the day in the form of sensory activities—and of such activities sight is the chief. The first of these pictures is that of a lady clad and crowned right like a daisy. Indeed she is the poet's own lady, already adored through the symbol of the flower, and now idealized and sublimated, after

<sup>9</sup> This device of verbal repetition, to heighten the naturalness of the dream, had already been employed by Chaucer in the *Book of the Duchess*. At the outset the poet says of his own love-sorrow and sickness (39-40); "Ther is physicien but oon, That may me hele." So the bereaved Man in Black in the dream (570), "Ne hele me may no phisicien."

<sup>10</sup> So Cicero in *De Divinatione*, XX, "Maximeque reliquiae earum rerum moventur in animis et agitantur de quibus vigilantes aut cogitavimus aut egimus."

the radiant fashion of dreams, into a great queen, a being so rich and rare that the dreamer knows her not. Nothing could be truer to the dream-life than such a lack of recognition. Havelock Ellis has remarked<sup>11</sup> "the fundamental split of dreaming intelligence. On the one side is the subconscious yet often highly intelligent combination of imagery along rational although often bizarre lines. On the other hand is concentrated the conscious intelligence of the dreamer struggling to comprehend and explain the problems offered by the pseudo-external imagery thus presented to it. In dreams subconscious intelligence plays a game with conscious intelligence."<sup>12</sup> Hence arises the problem which the dreaming Chaucer cannot solve without the aid of the god of Love—a problem which baffles readers still—the earthly identity of the daisy-lady of the dream. Indeed, until the final revelation, the sleeper is unable either to name the dream-woman or to draw the parallel, constantly suggested through the imagery and long suspected by the reader, between her and the object of his waking worship.<sup>13</sup> Love's analysis of the psychological situation is as accurate as his humor is delicious (F. 547):

"Thy litel witte was thilke tyme aslepe."

The repeated use of the phrase, "my lady," in the refrain of the dream balade (F.) sung in praising of the noble queen,

<sup>11</sup> *The World of Dreams*, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> "The things that happen in dreams, the pseudo-external world that is presented to the sleeping consciousness, the imagery that floats before the mental eyes of sleep" are to Chaucer as to other dreamers a perpetual source of astonishment and argument. Both in the *Book of the Duchess* and in the *House of Fame* the sleeper seems unable to test and sift the new experience, he perceives but does not apperceive. Professor Kittredge says very truly of the dreamer in the earlier poem (*Chaucer and his Poetry* p. 49): "He understand nothing, not even the meaning of his dream. He can only tell what happened and leave the interpretation to us. The dreamer . . . is always wondering and never understanding." But when Mr. Kittredge adds that "the childlike dreamer who never reasons but only feels and gets impressions is not Geoffrey Chaucer, the humorist and man of the world," he ignores the essential quality of all dreaming. In their visions men, both wise and simple, show ever this childlike wonder.

<sup>13</sup> Let me insist that the "belated recognition" motive in the *Legend Prologue* has literally nothing in common with the dreamer's failure to recognize his guide in the *Paradys d'Amours*. In the French poem the unrecognized person is merely an allegorical figure, of whom we have heard nothing in the

and in the poet's comment upon the subject of the verses, culminating in "my lady sovereign" (275), serves to blend the actual and visionary women into one in the reader's mind, as did green garb and daisy crown. But such identification is always implicit and subconscious and, until the end, is hidden from the dreamer himself, so that we, in partial possession of the secret, enjoy a situation abounding in "dramatic irony." The feminine symbolism of the daisy in the lover's waking hours is recalled and emphasized in the homage paid in the dream by the great troop of true women to the flower "that displays the glory of us all in a figure or emblem." (F. 293 f).<sup>14</sup>

The dreamer, at first a mere spectator, is soon drawn into the center of the action, for dreams are absolutely egotistic. Chaucer asleep, under the sway of phantasy, is doubtless a less rational creature than Chaucer awake, but he is Geoffrey Chaucer still. As the eagle in the *House of Fame* reproaches the poet for his ignorance of love's folk through absorption in work and study (II, 135), so the god in the Prologue rebukes him (322) for the harm done to love's folk by his writings. And the gracious queen who undertakes his defence is not merely the mythical Alceste, but, although the dreamer's sleeping wit knows it not, the transfigured self of his "lady sovereign" and hence the woman most deeply versed in his poems of love. Indeed, if she be the person we think her, she must have known all his work for over twenty years and hence have been able to discuss the date and the substance of each book far more fitly and fully than, shall we say, young Queen Anne, whose English life and speech were so new. At length the dream-woman discloses her name near the end of her plea to the Love god, "I your Alceste, whilom Queen of Trace" (F. 432); but this suspended disclosure seemingly conveys as little to the dreamer as

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waking prelude to the poem; in the English, she is the poet's own lady, symbolized by the daisy in his waking moments. Again in the French this lack of recognition is a trivial incident occupying two or three lines at most; in the English, it seems to spring from the very nature of dreams, provides the poem with its dominant idea and furnishes the necessary suspense. Great should be the compensations of source-hunting to atone for the losses in straight thinking entailed by too stern and unimaginative a chase.

<sup>14</sup> I accept Macaulay's apt rendering (*Modern Language Review*, IV, 19) of the line, "that bereth our alder pris in figuringe."

the frequent repetition of "Alceste" in G. (179, 209, 317, 422).<sup>15</sup> His conscious intelligence, groping for the actual *ego* of the woman, confesses, in answer to Love's query, that he knows not whether she is wife or maid or queen or countess, he can only acknowledge the goodness of this fit leader of good women. The light of identification of the ideal with the actual comes only after Love has once more mentioned her name, and has reminded the dreamer, whose wit is now waking, of her sacrifice and metamorphosis. Then and not until then does the sleeper read the riddle in his words (F. 518-519),

"And is this good Alceste  
The daysie and myn owene hertes reste?"

Thus Alceste the mythical is equated with a woman of the poet's world. Who was that woman?

Precedent and probability point to another and humbler woman than the flesh-and-blood Queen Anne or than the phantom, Queen Alceste. The varying interpretations of Machaut's *Voir Dit* provide at once suggestion and warning. Early scholars like Caylus and Tarbé found its heroine in Agnes de Navarre, as Ten Brink and his clan saw in the *Legend Prologue* only Anne of Bohemia, although many lines in both poems could never have been written of such high-placed ladies. Others of dehumanizing bent like Hanf<sup>16</sup> discovered in the *Voir Dit*, as Lowes and Kittredge in the Prologue, only pure fiction without any real foundation. Then Paulin Paris in his edition<sup>17</sup> read the hidden name of the two anagrams as "Peronne d'Armentieres"—a solution amply confirmed by Deschamps (Balade 447), who surely must have known. In like fashion we shall seek to pluck out the heart of our mystery. Were not the Marguerite poems that most influenced Chaucer written by the Frenchmen to women of their own rank who bear the flower's name? Who doubts that the girl in Froissart's *Dittié de la Fleur de la Margherite* and of the *Paradys d'Amours* was the charming reader of the *Cléomadès* in the *L'Espinet Amoureuse*—

<sup>15</sup> G. is, in this regard, *Hamlet* without Hamlet. Motives like this theme of the doubtful identity of the lady survive from F. without the living personality and the consequent dream-psychology that gave them full warrant.

<sup>16</sup> *Zs. für rom. Phil.* XXII, 145-96, cited by Raynaud, I, xl.

<sup>17</sup> See Machaut's fondness for such devices, Tarbé's index, s. v. "Énigme."

no queen but a maiden of good family, a Marguerite whose full name like Froissart's, is hidden in four lines:

"Je hantoie la tempre et tart  
Dont *frois*, dont chaud, navres d'un *dart*  
D'amours; et lors de fleurs petites  
Violetes et *margherites*."<sup>18</sup>

Deschamps, it is true, writes at least three balades (417, 463, 469) to a royal lady, Marie of Hungary, but in all these he keeps his humble distance, addressing her in the first as "the future Empress of Rome," picturing her in the second as "pour un roy tresjoieuse pasture" and comparing her in the third with a dozen flowers, the Marguerite among them. But his chief Marguerite balade (539), which, as Mr. Lowes says, "repeats the substance and often the phraseology of the *Lai de Franchise*," is doubtless addressed to "Marguerite la Clivete, nonain d'Ormont," with whom Deschamps couples his own name, "Eustache Morel" in the word-play of the very next balade (540). As we have seen, the prelude of the *Filostrato*, which Chaucer converts to the praise of his lady, was penned to no queen, but to Boccaccio's innamorata, the lively Fiammetta. And let us remember that, although Boccaccio wished to dedicate his "book of good women," *De Claris Mulieribus*, to Joan, Queen of Naples, he did not dare approach so near the throne, but conveys his homage to the royal dame through a letter to that worthy wife, Andrea d'Acciauli. Who is the worthy English wife that bids Chaucer send the book to Anne? A study of analogues thus speeds us on our way to truth.

Such an equation as this of Alceste with a living woman is in accord with Chaucer's custom elsewhere. Very recently he had boldly coined for his ends a personal allegory directly in the teeth of old myths and fables as men knew them. The "Fair Anelida" of story could never have been associated by tradition with Arcite of Thebes as she is, on the evidence of both the *Intelligenza*, st. 75, and Froissart's *Dit dou Bleu Chevalier*

<sup>18</sup> *L'Espinette Amoureuse*, 3380-3383. Scheler, *Poésies de Froissart*, I, 389, suggests *Vrediau* as the lady's name, but he breaks the rules of the game by going outside of the four lines of the problem. I should prefer *Petit*, a common French surname, which fulfils the conditions of the enigma, but is perhaps too bourgeois for our purpose. In any case, Froissart's lady like Chaucer's was so obscure that the riddle is hard to solve.

(301), which couple her with Iwain, a heroine of the Arthurian cycle. But Chaucer brings the two together from opposite poles of romance, merely because Anne Welle, Anelida's counterpart in real life, was mated to Arcite's name-fellow, d'Arcy or James Butler. Moreover Chaucer, turned Kingmaker, lavishly bestows upon this "character in the matter of Britain" the far-off Kingdom of Ermonye, simply because Anne Welle was the then living Countess of Ormonde (Comtissa Ermonie).<sup>19</sup> And since the third Earl of Ormonde had been untrue to his lady, our poet unhesitatingly substitutes a "false Arcite" (save the mark!) for Boccaccio's paragon of lovers. These fire-gilt innovations, unblushingly invented for contemporary application and consumption, are bolstered up by an appeal to pseudo-antiquity and to such spurious authority as "Corinne." So here we may be sure that the metamorphosis of Alceste into a daisy—which men have vainly sought "with thimbles and care" in the old Greek world of wonder—is of the English poet's own making.<sup>20</sup> The miracle is demanded by his allegorical needs of the moment, for only thus can the Alceste of his dream be directly identified with the beloved lady of his waking moments in the field, "the daysie and myn owene hertes reste." An apocryphal "Agaton" is cited to sustain the setting of Alceste in the heavens as a star, whose shape recalls the daisy. Fortune smiles upon our poet's daring. "Corinne," it now appears, was an old Theban poetess, to whom a legend of the ruined city might well be attributed. Agathon, Aristotle tells us,<sup>21</sup> wrote a tragedy called "The Flower"—"in that all is invention, both incidents and names." Could Chaucer have forged more likely sources for his allegorizings?

Alceste of the dream and the living lady symbolized by the daisy of Chaucer's May-day are obviously one and the same. By the riddling use of the name "Anelida,"<sup>22</sup> the reader is led

<sup>19</sup> I have thus interpreted the *Anelida and Arcite* in my article, "Chaucer's Tale of Ireland," *P. M. L. A.*, June 1921.

<sup>20</sup> In this bit of myth-making Chaucer may possibly have caught a hint (at least, many so think) from Froissart's story, in his *Marguerite Dittie*, of the birth of the daisy from the tears shed by Heres on the grave of Cephef.

<sup>21</sup> *Art of Poetry*, Twining, I, 128, cited by Skeat, III, xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>22</sup> Let us remember that *Anelida and Arcite* is very close to the *Legend* not only in its date, but in its theme, man's inhumanity to noble womanhood.



to see that the name of Alceste is quite as significant as her story. As I have already indicated, Chaucer had large precedent for his name-play. Machaut was particularly fond of anagrams and number-riddles disguising ladies who had touched his heart.<sup>23</sup> The other French Marguerite poets had played upon the names of their loves;<sup>24</sup> but an Englishman debarred from the obvious parallel between the names of maiden and flower must pun more subtly. Pun he must, as name-play had become traditionally associated with the daisy-cult. Even the trick of concealing a modern name within the compass of a classical one was known before Chaucer. Froissart wraps the name "Aelix" in that of "Polixena":

"Polixena, vostre nom me remainne  
Dedens le vostre en V lettres et qui  
M'ont pluisours fois en pensant resjoy."<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly enough Boccaccio employs, in the Sixth Eclogue, the name "Alcestus" to denote King Louis of Hungary: "Alcestus dicitur ab Alce, quod est Virtus, et Aestus quod est Fervor." Chaucer's word-play will surely be better than this. If "Ane-lida" equals "Anne Welle," what is our "Alceste" equation? No long scrutiny of the Prologue's form of the mythical name was necessary to convince me that, in fourteenth-century England, "Alceste" could fitly suggest only "Alice Cestre." Now was it not entirely reasonable to argue that, if a woman of such a name played any part in the story of Chaucer's life, the trail was the right one and the goal was near? So I turned me hot-foot to Professor Kuhl's serviceable index<sup>26</sup> of the *Life Records of Chaucer*, where I straightway found this startling entry:—"Alice de Cestre, K. H. 163, 53, 1368; 170, 55, 1369; 173, 58,

<sup>23</sup> Hoepffner, "Anagramme und Rätselgedichte bei Guillaume de Machaut" (*Zs. f. rom. Phil.*, XXX, 1906, 401 f.) shows that Machaut in puzzles of every sort half conceals and half reveals not only his own name and that of the royal or ducal patron of the moment, but the names of many ladies from Peronelle d'Armentieres (*supra*) to the shadowy women of the Berne manuscript, Johanne, Alis, Francoise, Agnes, Marie.

<sup>24</sup> So Chaucer's follower, James I, puns upon the name of Lady Joan Beaufort in the description of the chaplet in the *Kings Quhair* (st. 47): "The plumys eke like to the flour *Jonettis*, etc."

<sup>25</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Oeuvres de Froissart*, I, 32.

<sup>26</sup> *Modern Philology*, 1912, p.

1369." Then to the corresponding pages of Kirk<sup>27</sup> to discover that in the "Schedule of Names of the Household of Edward III for whom Robes for Christmas 1368 were to be provided, including Philippa Chaucer among the Damoiselles and Geoffrey Chaucer among the Esquires," one of the four Souzdamoiselles was "Alliceon de Cestre." On March 10, 1369, in a "Writ of Privy Seal to Henry de Snayth, Keeper of the Great Wardrobe, to deliver certain quantities of cloth and furs to the Damoiselles in the Queen's Service, including Philippa Chaucer for Christmas last past," Alice de Cestre, as a Souzdamoiselle, receives "x alnes de drap, 1 furure, ½ de bys." Her final appearance in the Household Book is six months later, Sept. 1, 1369, in yet another "Writ of Privy Seal to Henry de Snayth, Clerk, Keeper of the Wardrobe, directing him to issue divers lengths of black cloth to the Members of the King's Household for their mourning at the funeral of Queen Philippa." Philippa Chaucer and Aliceon de Cestre, like other damoiselles, receive, each, six ells of black cloth, long, and Geoffrey Chaucer, three ells of the same, short. Alice Cestre, as a member of the Royal Household, was associated with both Chaucer and his wife in 1368 and 1369. She must have known them well, as the company of damoiselles and esquires was not very large.

Now was Alice Cestre maid, wife or widow, during these last days of Queen Philippa?<sup>28</sup> She could not be Chaucer's Alceste, if she were not 'a pattern to any woman that will love a man,' and if her own life had not

"taughte al the crafte of fyne loving  
And namely of wyfhode the lyvyng,  
And al the boundes that she oghte kepe."

Nor do I think that she could be Chaucer's Alceste, unless she had early lost her husband, and had long cherished his memory.

<sup>27</sup> *Chaucer Society*, 1900, 2d Ser. 32.

<sup>28</sup> It is probable that the three sousdamoiselles with whom Alice Cestre is three times mentioned were all married women. Marie or Margery Olney was certainly the wife of John Olney, one of the esquires. On May 11, 1420, John Olney of Weston, Bucks, in his last testament (Furnivall, *Fifty English Wills*, *E. E. T. Soc.*, 78 P. 48) made Margery his wife, his executrix, and, after several legacies, bequeathed to her the residue of his estate. Marie or Marion Hervey was doubtless married to William Hervey, and Joan de Hynton to Thomas Hynton, both men about court. Few doubt that Geoffrey and Philippa Chaucer were then man and wife.

Alice Cestre might not 'for her husband choose to die and eke to go to hell rather than he'; for Chaucer deprecates that comparison at the outset by telling us that 'no one that dwelleth in this country hath either been in hell or heaven; but if she be the woman of our seeking, she was assuredly one of love's martyrs. Just what do we know of the married life of this fourteenth-century lady? At the end of June 1356, John de Cestre and Alice his wife received from the King an annuity of ten marks out of the twelve pounds which the husband was required to pay him yearly for the farm of the hundred of Kynton in Warwickshire.<sup>29</sup> If this grant was made not long after the marriage of the pair, Alice might well be the exact contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer, for in these days girls were mated in their early and middle teens. The next mention of John and Alice together is just nine years later, July 2, 1365,<sup>30</sup> when a license for 100 shillings is paid by John de Carthorp, parson of the church of West Tanfield, for the alienation in mortmain to him by Alice de Cestre and John de Cestre, Chaplain,<sup>31</sup> of two messuages, 28 acres of land, and five acres of meadow in West Tanefield, Thornebergh and Byncehowe,<sup>32</sup> to celebrate divine service daily for the souls of Alice and John, when they are departed this life and of their heirs and ancestors." This seems to have been a timely spiritual investment on the part of Alice's husband, as he died within five years. On Jan. 26, 1370, in the Close Rolls, and on April 3, 1370, in the Patent Rolls, is recorded "a grant for life or until further order to Alice, *late the wife* of John de Cestre, for long service, of 10.£ yearly of the issues of

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, June 29, 30, 1356.

<sup>30</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls* under date.

<sup>31</sup> There seems little reason to suppose that our "John de Cestre, chaplain," was the John Cestre, chaplain," to whom the Bishop of Winchester granted on June 25, 1361, land and rent at Farnham for celebrating divine service every day in the chapel of the Bishop's castle at that town for his health and for his soul after death (*Cal. Close Rolls*). It is not unlikely that our John was the John de Cestre, who, on Oct. 18, 1361, was appointed with Thomas Prest to "the office of the saucery during pleasure," as Prest's name appears later on a list of esquires at court during Alice's service there (Dec. 1368).

<sup>32</sup> West Tanfield is on the Ure in Yorkshire, midway between Ripon and Masham. Thornbrough, Bingoe and Carthorp are neighboring hamlets. A far cry from these Northern localities to Kynton in Warwickshire!

the manor at Haveryng-atte-Boure [in the present Epping Forest, Essex] on surrender by her of previous letters patent dated June 30 in the King's thirtieth year (*supra*), which granted her and *her late husband, who has gone the way of all flesh*,<sup>33</sup> 10 marks yearly of the farm due the king from the hundred of Kyn-ton in Warwickshire."

Let us mark that King Edward, who had solemnly promised the dying Philippa to pay all legacies and pensions to the squires and damsels who had served her (Froissart), was requiting Alice for her "long service." From the *Life Records* we have seen that she was a sousdamoiselle of the Queen for at least a year before her Majesty's death in 1369. And one entry in the *Patent Rolls* a dozen years later, June 3, 1380, seems to attest a length of service that conforms to the phrase in the King's grant. It is here duly recorded that, at the time of the visitation of the Hospital of St. Katherine near the Tower of London, on Thursday, August 6, 1377, Katherine de Cologne, one of the damsels of the Princess of Wales, alleged a grant to her by the King of a corrody in the Hospital which Queen Philippa founded for her damsels and bestowed in succession on Isabella Hild, Margaret Chene, Margaret Monceaux, Alice Chester and Joan Moris. John de Hermesthorp, the Master of the Hospital, and three chaplains and three sisters unanimously declared upon oath that the alleged corrody had never been founded or be-

<sup>33</sup> The compiler of the Index to the *Patent Rolls* seems to think that Alice's husband (dying between 1365 and 1370) was the John de Chestre, for whose killing John Horpal was pardoned May 17, 1367 on the plea of self-defense. I doubt very much whether our John the Chaplain died thus violently. As Horpal was confined in Northampton-Jail, and as in 1365 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1364-7, p. 147) one John de Chestre of Stamford was associated with the Sheriff of Northampton in an inquisition of the names of certain felons who had stolen silver vessels of the King, the probabilities are that it was this John of Stamford, once outlawed for the murder of his servant, who was slain. Moreover, there were many John de Chestres or Cestres in fourteenth-century England: a John Chestre of Plymouth appointed with others to guard that port against the King's enemies, June 3, 1360 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*), a John Chestre who was killed by William Brerele of West Wardon, May 28, 1377, (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*), a John Chestre, Fellow of Merton College, 1348, and Bursar in 1368-9 and afterwards (Brodrick, *Memorials of Merton College*, 1885, p. 204), a John de Cestre, Barber of Leicester in 1368-9 (Bateson, *Records of Borough of Leicester*, 1901, p. 143) and doubtless many more. Only when "John" is associated with "Alice," can we be sure of our man.

stowed by the Queen. The allegation, true or not, implies that Alice Cestre held a well established place at court. The denial of Hermesthorp and his subordinates would seem to show that she was never a sister at the hospital. Of Alice's later history, after the granting of the Havering pension, we at present know nothing.<sup>34</sup> But the association of her widowhood with Queen Philippa's service in the days of Chaucer's attendance at court adapts her fitly for the rôle of Alceste.

Alice Cestre was at least Chaucer's age, perhaps in her late forties, when she enters the *Legend* Prologue as "my lady" and "Alceste."<sup>35</sup> He who likes to think of greybeards with green girls, of Machaut at sixty doting upon a juvenile Peronelle, of senile Edward in the arms of Alice de Perrers, rather than of Chaucer chanting his loving regard for a woman also in middle age, whom he had known for twenty years, will cry out against our identification. But why, in the study of literature, should we reject what would be so normal and natural in life<sup>36</sup>—particularly in the study of the *Legend* whose very first pair of lovers, Antony and Cleopatra, had passed the middle of the way? If, moreover, in balancing the probabilities, a reader deems it more likely that the glowing lines of the F. Prologue, the Fiammetta and the Marguerite passages, were addressed by our warm-blooded poet to Queen Anne rather than to Madame Alice, and that the comparison of the dream lady, love's martyr, Alceste, who had gone to hell for her husband, fits the young wife of Richard in her girlish light-heartedness, better than the middle-aged widow of John Cestre in her lifelong devotion to a memory, I must ask him to turn with me from the first Prologue

<sup>34</sup> Mr. A. C. Wood of the Public Record Office writes: "I will see if I can find anything about the Chaucerian lady, but I am not very hopeful. The entry on the *Close Roll* referred to (Jan. 26, 1370) looks as though the pension would not come in the Exchequer, but in the accounts of the bailiff of Havering, which are only fragments." Next summer in London, among British rolls and records, I faintly hope to find "Alice Cestre" and to learn something about her middle and later life.

<sup>35</sup> Nowhere in F. are we told that Alceste is young. She is womanly, benign and meek, beautiful and above all good, but never youthful. The daisy is, of course, 'young and fresh' (F. 103)—for, not only are fairness and freshness its natural properties, but these symbolize the spiritual qualities of the beloved.

<sup>36</sup> If Bartholomew atte Chapel had been a poet, what verses might have honored his bride, Chaucer's mother, when her son was approaching thirty!

to the second of some years later. What has gone out of the story is not reverence for a queen, but love for a woman. The poet has deliberately excised all the passages of personal affection for a creature of flesh and blood, penned at the promptings of "lovers that can make of sentiment" (Boccaccio and the Frenchmen), now unromanticized into mere "folk," and becomes in Love's eyes an "old fool" who scoffs at him, "that loves paramours too hard and hot" (G. 288. 314). So the god could never have spoken of the devotee, who himself boasted in F. (59), "There loved no wight hotter in his life." He is now no longer explicitly writing "in honor of love" as in F. 81-82. Indeed G. is a love-poem without the love. The second Prologue has gained greatly in external grace and finish, but it has lost the human soul of the cruder first version.<sup>37</sup> Either Alice Cestre has died in the interim of six or eight years between the two Prologues,<sup>38</sup> or she has still clung to her dead Admetus, or else Chaucer, despite his vow to love the daisy (that is, the daisy-lady) "till that myn herte dye" has ceased to love. But, in any case, a woman whom the poet has loved as an equal has gone out of the story.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there were in Chaucer's mind strong personal and local reasons for the association of Alice Cestre, and, through her, of Alceste, with the daisy. The Englishwoman, whose affiliations were with the court, may have been one of the party of the Flower, like Philippa of Lancaster, and hence may have gone forth on May-day, in company with those of her order, clad in green and garlanded with daisies, chanting adoration of the Marguerite—thus providing a very real suggestion of the dream company in the Prologue. Herein would lie ample occasion not only for Chaucer's consistent application of the Marguerite motive—daisy symbolism

<sup>37</sup> Gone from G., as Professor Tatlock has shown, (*Chronology*, p. 115) are seventy lines more or less closely connected with hearty personal feeling—the poets repeated expression of his pleasure in the daisy, and his warm love for the little flower and for her whom it symbolizes, his description of his eagerness to see it and of his long May-day kneeling and reclining by it in the fields, full of thoughts of his lady, and many human touches in the dream itself. At the end, which has undergone fewer changes, the Alceste word-play is still suggested but very faintly, as we have little sense of a living presence.

<sup>38</sup> I heartily agree that the absence from G. of the dedication to Anne points to a date after 1394 for the second Prologue.

and daisy garb and crown—to Alice Cestre, the actual woman, and to Alceste, her dream counterpart, but also for his repeated references to the strife between Flower and Leaf. As elsewhere, we are merely weighing probabilities.

Now it is not to be denied that Chaucer might have cherished another woman while his wife, Philippa, was living. Neither courtly love nor human nature put a ban upon such devotion;<sup>39</sup> and well, we cannot altogether forget that unhappy business of Cecilia de Champagne. But he surely could never have professed a lavish devotion to another woman than his wife in the Prologue to a group of poems exposing and berating unfaithful husbands, if that Prologue was written before his wife's death in the latter half of 1387.<sup>40</sup> The author of the *Canterbury Tales* is a mighty master of irony. His sinners loathe and attack their own outrageous faults, exhibited in like degree by other men. The wildly angry Somnour tells the story of a friar who is made as wroth as a wild boar after sermonizing and pleading against Ire. The avaricious Pardoner, drinking and blaspheming upon a tavern bench, directs his preachment and tale against Avarice and Tavern Sins. The Manciple, after large abuse of the Cook, scores in his story and its moral a too free use of the tongue. But the unconscious humor of each of these offenders would pale beside that of the poet himself, should he, in the compass of a single work, attack at length false lovers and husbands and prove, even in words, false to his wife. If the *Legend of Good Women* was written before Philippa Chaucer's death, the lady

<sup>39</sup> Coulton, *Chaucer and his England*, p. 28, says in another connection: "Nobody who has closely studied medieval society, either in romance or in chronicle, would suppose that Chaucer blushed to feel a hopeless passion for another or to write openly while he had a wife of his own."

<sup>40</sup> The wide belief that F. was written before 1387 may explain in a measure the instinctive unwillingness of those who defend its priority to recognize the presence of an "unknown lady"—other than Anne or a mythical Greek heroine. No poet could be unfaithful in a poem that extolled fidelity in marriage, hence there could be no "other woman." That any scholar thus reasoned, is sheer assumption, for it does not appear that anyone ever came close enough to the heart of our matter to perceive its most obvious implications. And perish the thought that a man in praising good wives could begin with a paean upon his own! Indeed such a possibility seems never to have occurred to any interpreter. Poor Philippa! That those who deem F. to be late should have failed to find any traces of the concealed lady to whom the widower might have paid legitimate homage is somewhat harder to understand.

of his waking moments, she who is symbolized by the daisy and is extolled in the lines from the *Filostrato*, can be only the poet's wife. But as there seem to be no reasons for equating Alceste and Philippa either in name or in story, and as there exist the two strong arguments of characteristic word-play and a common widowhood for the identification of Alceste with Alice Cestre,<sup>41</sup> I conclude that the F. Prologue was written after Philippa's passing in 1387—certainly not earlier than 1388.

Now let us see how far remaining evidence in the case—it is very slight—supports or opposes this 1388 date of the *Legend* Prologue. Chaucer could not have had access to Deschamps *Lai de Franchise*, 1385, before the spring or summer of 1386 (Lowes). But have we any right to draw the inference that Chaucer used the Frenchman's poem at the earliest possible opportunity, when we remember that another important source of the Prologue, Froissart's *Paradys d'Amours* had lain by him for nearly twenty years since the days of the *Book of the Duchesse*? The year 1386 is valuable only as a *terminus a quo*. Now we have seen that the *Anelida and Arcite*, which resembles the *Legend* in its theme of true wife and false husband and in its word-play upon the lady's name, could hardly have been written before 1386.<sup>42</sup> Between the *Anelida and Arcite* and the *Legend* is a version of the *Knight's Tale*, "al the love of Palamoun and Arcite" (which may have been long in the making). Prologue F, in no way, contradicts but rather confirms either a 1387 or 1388 date for the last. We must however, give due weight to Professor Tatlock's argument,<sup>43</sup> from the close likeness between *The Testament of Love*, I, Prol. 94-114, and F. 66-77, that Thomas Usk must have known the "gleaning" passage in the earlier version of the Prologue and that therefore F. was written sometime before Usk's death in March 1388, or rather before the penning of the *Testament* in 1387. Usk's indebtedness to Chaucer in this instance—and his passage is quite in the manner of

<sup>41</sup> The happy recognition of the possibilities of the faithful Alceste as a heroine, in the twofold citation of her and her story in the *Troilus*, V, 1527-1533, 1777-1778, anticipated by several years the far happier thought of identifying in a dream-poem the mythical queen with a living woman of similar name and character.

<sup>42</sup> See my article, "Chaucer's Tale of Ireland," *P. M. L. A.*, June 1921.

<sup>43</sup> *Chronology*, p. 22.



his borrowings from the *House of Fame* and *Troilus*, with alteration, expansion and disfigurement—would militate against our view that Chaucer's wife was dead when he wrote the *Legend Prologue*. The time between Philippa's death in the summer of 1387 and Usk's execution in the spring of 1388, seems far too short for so many happenings—the widower's finding of a new love, the penning of a long poem in her praise, and Usk's use of this in the prologue to a prose tract of large compass. We can only overleap the obstacle, which is a very real one, by concluding either that Chaucer borrowed from Usk, a possibility suggested by Tatlock in the case of likenesses between the *Testament* and the poet's later works; or that both writers drew the idea, which has all the earmarks of a literary convention, from a common source. It is noteworthy that this is the single significant parallel between the two works. If Usk had known the *Legend*, which may be called Chaucer's own "testament of love," would he not have lifted as largely from this as from the *Boethius* or the *Troilus* or the *House of Fame*? Personally, I am inclined to think that Usk did not know or use the Prologue and that the resemblance in question does not therefore militate against our 1388 date for the first version. Other men may be of another mind.

With the passing of the Anne-Alceste equation, if pass it ever will, should also perish the desperate attempt to identify the conventional figure of the Love god with young Richard II. One must admit, however, that Chaucer could hardly have written Alceste's admonitions to the god and ruler, without some thought of the parlous plight of the English monarch through his own unwisdom. The warnings of the Thracian queen are a medley of traditional precepts of royal conduct drearily familiar to anyone versed in John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus*, in the "regimens of princes" and in the chess-book moralities of which I must speak elsewhere. To connect such long current "polity" with this or that year of the young King's misrule is a fascinating though rather futile pastime. For instance, it is easy to show that such counsel would have been most timely in the spring and summer of 1388, and to indicate some really striking verbal parallels between the cautions of Alceste (in F. as well as G.) and the petition of the commons

to the King<sup>44</sup> in this year of the Merciless Parliament. But any "chronological conclusions," thus derived, are admittedly insecure. Our dates will be surer, if some day we learn something more of Alice Cestre.

So this is the love-story that Chaucer tells in the F. Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*. To Alice Cestre, whom he has known since his early days at court, twenty years before, and whom he now deems the light of his life, his guide, his earthly God, he pays May-day homage through the daisy. Was his "lady sovereign" merely a lover of the fresh and fair flower, or was she perchance a member of the courtly order that vaunted it as an emblem? We know not, but this we know—that the English poet chose to symbolize her by the same pretty floral device with which French dames of her class had been honored by their lovers. When the long May day is over and he lays him down to rest, he sees, because she has been so lately in his thought, his daisy-lady transfigured by dream-magic into a great queen wearing a flowery crown of white and gold above her green raiment. In this sublimated being, this phantom of delight, he fails to recognize the woman of his waking worship, because his little wit, like the man himself, is "thilke time aslepe." Though she attests full knowledge of the writings of all his life, and grants him effective protection against the Love god's wrath, the dreamer seems to know nought of her save that she is good. And then comes Love's revelation that arouses his conscious intelligence; and the lady of the dream is known at last as 'his own heart's rest,' the daisy-lady of his adoration. Alceste, in name, in ideal loving, in devotion to a husband's memory, in transcendent grace and goodness, and in her flowery metamorphosis, is no other than Alice Cestre, Chaucer's lady of the daisies.

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<sup>44</sup> This document, couched in French, is given in full by Knighton, *Chronicle* II, 266 f.